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AUTHOR Heady, James; Niewoehrer, Melanie
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ABSTRACT

Discussed is the application of behavior management techniques to problem behaviors of normal children in the home or school. Examples are given of such techniques as behavioral contracting between child and adult, reduction of undesirable behaviors through withdrawal of reinforcers ("bother sticks" and "temper tickets"), the use of a timer to speed behavior, behavior charting in the home through use of "yes/no graph paper", and self charting. The techniques are seen as appropriate for decreasing such behaviors as talking out in class, leaving soiled clothing on the floor, and acting out behavior. It is stressed that the major steps in establishing successful behavioral intervention are: (1) pin pointing very specifically the inappropriate behaviors; (2) finding effective reinforcers for the child; and (3) stating very clearly what must be accomplished before a reward is offered. (DB)

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STUDENT MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES THAT WORK

James Heady and Melanie Niewoehner
Research Assistants

Department of Special Education
College of Human Resources and Education
West Virginia University

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As educators we are continually reminded that control, whether individual or on a classroom basis, is an on going concern. Many times our classes exhibit model behavior, but at other times one or two students, are capable of undoing even the best of us. In addition to displaying annoying inappropriate behavior, these students may not attend to academic tasks as well as we might hope they would. Furthermore, some students just seem to lack the motivation necessary to handle even the most routine tasks assigned them, even though they have little or no disruptive behavior.

With the implementation of Public Law 94-142 we are very much liable to find in our classes more disruption than normal. We certainly do not mean to imply that handicapped children are going to create new behavior problems, but that by their presence perhaps new situations will arise where inappropriate behaviors may be more frequent. This may stem not from the new students but possibly from one or more of the students already in the class.

With this in mind we set out to test several methods of dealing with control and motivation. More precisely we wanted to determine if by using several behavior management techniques we could control those disruptive or otherwise troublesome students and motivate the unmotivated.

To do this, we first gained the cooperation of four elementary school teachers. We asked them to provide us with

at least one student each that they felt they would like to have either behaviorally or academically managed. Our purpose was not to deal directly with the students, but rather coach the teachers in applying techniques to solve this problem with their students.

As our experience with the classroom teachers progressed, we felt to truly test the programs we had, we should attempt to change the behaviors of children on their own turf: at home. To do this, we also enlisted the cooperation of four local families, all expressing a desire to change some behavior their children emitted.

In several of the cases to follow we duplicated the techniques used in school and at home. Also, some of the techniques were unique only to school or to home. Our school study and our home study were separated by approximately 30 miles to avoid having one group overlap the other.

In some cases baseline data were taken prior to introduction of the technique. However, some children were started directly in a program and their progress recorded daily. In all instances we used positive reinforcement to gain the cooperation we desired.

Introduction to Contracts

Many times children are, or could be, very responsible individuals. If a child exhibits inappropriate behavior, that behavior might be extinguished by simply making a clear,

uncomplicated contract with the child. Three points must be included in each contract in addition to the names of the participants. They are: (1) specific statement of the undesirable behavior; (2) description of the reinforcer, and (3) the terms of the contract itself.

Contracting

One 10 1/2 year-old girl was continually engaged in a verbal battle against her parents and the issue was a familiar one: her messy bedroom. We asked the parties involved to sit down as we explained the reason for a behavioral contract (Fig. 1). After some negotiating it was decided that the girl was responsible for (1) hanging up her own clothes; (2) keeping the bureau top neat; (3) making sure garbage was in the wastebasket, and (4) keeping the floor in her bedroom free of litter, toys, books, etc. These four tasks had to be completed by 5:30 p.m. which is when her father arrived home from work and checked her room. If she completed this successfully 7 days in a row, she was allowed to take a friend to a movie or a local restaurant for pizza. The contract was then signed and dated, thereby binding all parties concerned.

It is important that parents realize the significance of <u>not</u> nagging a child to complete his task. The child is well aware of what he has committed herself to and prodding from an authority figure results in (1) verbal battles between parent and child and (2) continued dependence on the parent

rather than learning to complete the job automatically. By inspecting the task at the designated time and deciding if the job meets the criteria established, a parent is giving the child a choice, rather than backing him up against a wall, and the likelihood of positive results is much greater. A second example of contracting has been used successfully with an adolescent in curbing verbal abuse towards siblings.

A thirteen year-old boy verbally harrassed his younger brother. By explaining to him that his behavior was immature and unacceptable, and writing a simple contract which he and his parents signed, the behavior stopped. His reinforcer was payment by his parents for league bowling. The reinforcer was given each month and provided a convenient period to reassess his behavior.

Behavioral Contract

_____ agrees to emit the following behavior
(child's name)

behavior: _____

_____

during the time period of _____ to _____.
(dates)

Upon completion of the above contract _____
(child's name)

will receive _____
(reinforcer)

_____
(Child's signature)

_____
(Parent or teacher)

Figure 1.

"Bother Sticks"

One of the teachers with whom we worked was very distressed over a 12 year-old sixth grader who was constantly engaging in inappropriate behavior to the extent of interfering

with his learning and that of the other students in the classroom. The most annoying behavior she described to us was the continual interruptions coming from him while she was giving directions.

Baseline data showed that he interrupted (spoke without raising his hand or being recognized) approximately 6 times during a 45 minute period. We instructed the child's teacher to put seven tongue depressors in his pocket at the beginning of the period. Each time he interrupted her she was to remove a stick from his pocket being very careful not to say anything that would further provoke or anger this boy. The sticks left in his pocket at the end of the period were traded in on free time in the gym playing basketball.

The first week following baseline he was given 7 sticks daily and by the end of the week had 7 remaining. During the second week the number of sticks issued was 5 and again his behavior warranted keeping five by the end of the week. Unfortunately, due to snow days, standardized testing and sporadic attendance, the teacher and student became careless about issuing and regaining sticks as well as charting data. Because of this the boy's behavior has not been maintained as it might have been had the intervention not ceased. However, during the period the technique was used, very promising results were obtained.

"Temper Tickets"

A similar technique has been successful in decreasing

the frequency of acting out behavior (hitting, screaming, throwing, kicking).

Because one child spent time during the day in school, outside with friends and occupied in various activities, it became difficult to obtain baseline on this child concerning how many acting out incidents he engaged in daily. The parents estimated this number to be approximately six or seven each day. At this point we suggested a modification of the "bother sticks" technique explained earlier. This child was to be given seven straws every morning to be placed in a shirt or pants pocket. Each time he reacted in any of the inappropriate manners mentioned above, one straw was removed from his pocket without any verbalization from either parent. The straws were removed when he went to school or was away from home. This was done so the experiment could be closely monitored by his mother and father.

By studying the results, it is evident that the number of acting out incidents was curbed dramatically. The first day he lost all of his straws which indicates the habit he had acquired of acting out immediately regardless of the incident. However, for the remainder of the week he was able to keep more than half of the straws. The child had agreed with his parents before the intervention began he could trade 25 accumulated straws in at the end of the week for an army pen knife. One week following intervention, as he proudly displayed his newly acquired treasure, several

things appeared clear to us. First, the boy was beginning to work for long term rather than immediate rewards. Seccondly, the number of inappropriate behaviors had decreased markedly and finally, he had become a much happier member of his family.

Timer

Two girls, ages 10 and 8 seldom were able to wake up at a prescribed time, eat breakfast and be ready for school on time. Their mother said they had been able to get ready in 30 minutes some times, but generally they took as much as an hour and were regularly late. By using a favorite television program as the reinforcer, requiring the girls to set their own alarm clock and then setting an ordinary kitchen timer for 40 minutes they began from the first day of the program to eat breakfast and be ready for school before the timer rang. This system was run for six weeks and the girls only failed to be ready on time twice. The morning routine became established to the extent that the girls no longer needed the timer, but were able to manage their own time very effectively.

"Yes/No Graph Paper" In The Home

The parents of three children, ages 13, 11, and 8 asked to be given a system that would have the children pick-up their soiled clothing from the floor before going to bed. Interestingly, the parents had tried many techniques, all

based on punishment, but none had been successful. We provided a system known as Yes/No Graph Paper (Clements and Platt 1978) (Fig. 2) which involved having the parents and children pinpoint the undesirable behavior, state the reinforcer and write a simple contract which all parties signed. If the contract was fulfilled, the child placed a star, smiley face sticker, etc., on the "yes" line and he received his reinforcer. If the child did not meet criteria, he made a small X on the "no" line, received no reinforcer and nothing more was said to him about the clothes that day. The children said they would pick-up their clothes in exchange for a small glass of fruit juice of their choice at breakfast. After 63 days of using the system, there were only a total of five days in which the contract was not fulfilled by one or another of the children.

Interestingly, after the third week and several cans of assorted fruit juice, the parents and children unanimously decided to discontinue the juice as the reinforcer. The new reinforcer was a camping trip the following summer, which incidently the parents had planned anyway. Yes/No Graph Paper not only provided a system whereby the children did what was asked, but they also received a good lesson in delayed gratification.

After a second 63 day period with no reinforcement given, the children only received a total of three X's on the "No" line.

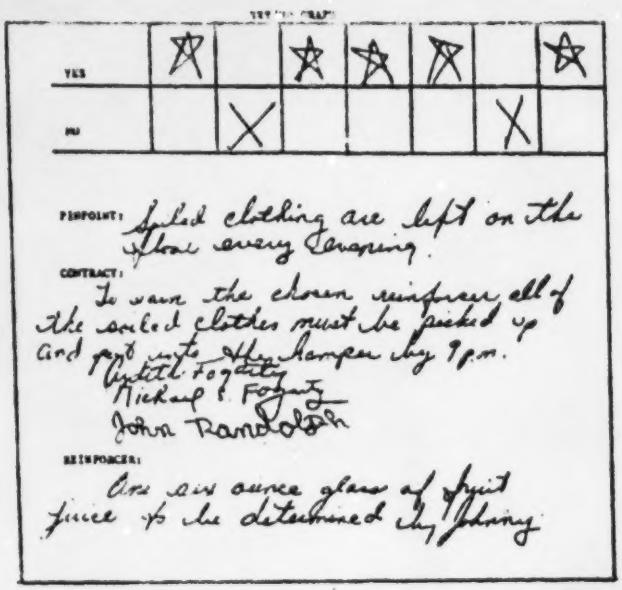
YES
NO
PINPOINT:
Soiled clothing are left on the floor every Evening.
CONTRACT:
To earn the chosen reinforcer all of the soiled clothes must be picked up and put into the hamper by 9 p.m.
Richard P. Fogarty
John Randolph
REINFORCER:
One six ounce glass of fruit juice to be determined by Johnny

Figure 2.

Another family hampered by the same difficulty handled their problem effectively using this technique.

After speaking to the parents of a 5 1/2 year-old boy it was apparent that their son was displaying some inappropriate behaviors interfering with his success in school. When we asked them what seemed to be the most troublesome they responded by saying, "We can never get him going in the morning; it's a continual battle to get him dressed and ready for kindergarten on time." We explained that children like this often lack organizational skills and once their morning routine is disorganized, their entire day is disorganized.

The child's morning consisted of getting out of bed, eating breakfast, and watching cartoons. It became difficult at this point to get this boy away from the television and ready for school.

By setting up a contingency between the child and his parents the verbal arguments disappeared. He was told at

10:30 a.m. that a kitchen timer was being turned on and he must be dressed by the time the bell sounded. If this happened the child received a "yes" and was allowed to select a book and have his mother read it to him before going to school. If he failed to complete dressing when the bell sounded, he received a "no" and placed an X on the "no" line.

The data indicates that this procedure was very successful. By the end of the first week he had stopped asking for the reinforcer and during the second week of intervention he no longer needed the cue of the timer. He is now ready for school on time, ready to face the responsibilities of the day and feeling much better about himself.

The implications for Yes/No Graph Paper in the classroom setting are obvious.

Personal Intervention Paper (PIP)

Personal Intervention Paper (Platt and Clements, 1978) has successfully been used in classroom and home settings.

A nine year-old girl was retained in first grade. Her teacher complained that she was very impulsive and spoke out whenever she felt she had something to say. Not only was this behavior annoying, but it prevented other students from working at their potential.

Our objective was to reduce the number of inappropriate disruptions in a given period. We felt that if she was made aware of the extent of the problem and required to maintain

data on herself, she would choose to reduce her behavior.

We asked her what she would like to do as her reinforcer for reducing the outbursts. She initially requested ten minutes of free time to visit with another teacher in the building. After several weeks, we found this to be less powerful than we had hoped. We then changed the reinforcer to give the child five minutes of free time to visit with her own teacher on Friday afternoons.

Before starting her on self-charting we had the teacher record the number of inappropriate outbursts for one week. We found she spoke out an average of eleven times per one hour period. Next we told her that to earn her free-time she would have to monitor her own behavior and record on a piece of paper taped to her desk the number of times she interrupted during the target period. For the first week she was to only speak out six times or less per period. Following the period she plotted on a graph taped to the wall (Fig. 3), the number of times she interrupted that day. At the end of the week she had managed to reduce her outbursts to six per period and received her free time.

The following week we reduced the number of outbursts to four and proceeded as above. She again met criteria and received her free time.

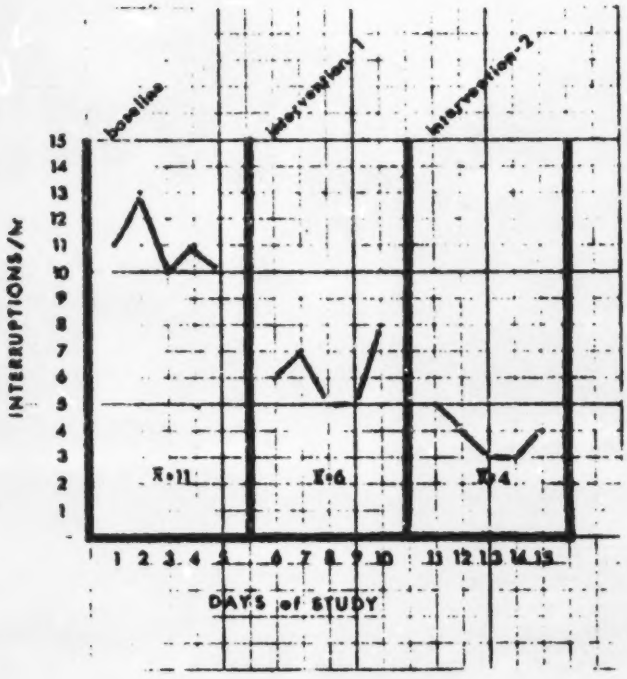

Figure 3.

An eleven year-old boy attending fourth grade in public school was having difficulty beginning and completing assignments on time as well as attending to task. His teacher complained that he was able to do the work but had little motivation to do so.

Baseline data taken five days in succession indicated the child was completing less than one assignment daily and the work rarely met criterion. With the use of PIP within a 1 week period the child was able to systematically increase his working time in school to three completed assignments at or above the required level.

We again used the timer and instructed the child that he must complete one assignment with 70% or more of the

items correct by the time the bell sounded. If this occurred he was permitted to view a filmstrip in the classroom. The data sheets indicate during days 6-10 he was absent once but was able to meet the required level for three of the remaining four days. During the third week (days 11-14) standardized tests were being administered to all students and no specific assignments were issued. However, it is encouraging to note that his classroom teacher asked him on days 15-17 to complete 2 assignments thereby increasing the requirement and days 18-20 he was completing three assignments on time.

It is interesting as well as encouraging to note that during the last six days of the intervention, the child's rate of correct responses increased to 90% on almost half (7/15) of the work turned in.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that management techniques can be effectively integrated into a child's home or school curriculum, thereby showing a marked decrease or total elimination of undesired, inappropriate behaviors as well as a systematic increase of more acceptable actions. The three major steps in establishing a successful intervention are: (1) pin pointing very specifically the inappropriate behaviors; (2) finding effective reinforcers for the child and (3) stating very clearly what must be accomplished (task) before a reward is offered.

Many times teachers and parents alike become easily discouraged and criticize the techniques as being ineffective and quickly discard the idea. This is usually a result of inconsistent implementation, sporadic reinforcement and general loss of interest. A child receives the cue from the behavioral engineers; if he or she is enthusiastic and consistent in reinforcing the chances of improvement are much greater.

It is interesting to note that as the intervention continued and behaviors improved, a number of children stopped asking for reinforcers or didn't object as they were gradually phased out. Gradually is the key word here; a child who is rewarded with 30 minutes free-time after completing a designated task is very likely to rebel if this privilege is suddenly discontinued altogether.

Behavioral management can be a successful approach in eliminating inappropriate actions both at home and school. If carefully initiated it can go a long way in improving parent-teacher-child relationships.

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